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ABSTRACT

The Study of Successful Indicators (SIS) project in metropolitan school districts is one study within the Southwest Regional Laboratory's Metropolitan Educational Trends and Research Outcomes (METRO) Center. The mission of METRO is to address schooling issues surrounding the increasing numbers of educationally disadvantaged students in the Pacific Southwest. The SIS project focuses primarily on the district and community levels. At present, it is a research effort, but in its next phase it will offer to assist districts and communities in developing policies and practices to meet students' needs. The first part of the paper describes the extraordinary growth in the numbers of students from linguistic minorities in the metropolitan areas of the Pacific Southwest and in the number of languages they speak. This growth has not been in the central cities, but in those termed "edge cities." As a result, local education agencies have been faced with many challenges. The second section provides an overview of the SIS project, outlining its intention and general methodological framework. Problems that have impeded METRO's work are reviewed, and expectations for the next 4 years are introduced. To offer technical assistance to local education agencies and communities, METRO will have to identify those that are successfully hosting ethnically diverse students at present. There is a 13-item list of references. (SLD)

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Overview of the Study of Successful Practices in Metropolitan School Districts

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Introduction

The Study of Successful Indicators (SIS) project in metropolitan school districts is one study within the Southwest Regional Laboratory's (SWRL) Metropolitan Educational Trends and Research Outcomes (METRO) Center. The mission of the METRO Center is to address schooling issues surrounding the increasing numbers of educationally disadvantaged students in the Pacific Southwest (Arizona, California, and Nevada). The Center is engaged in four major applied research and development projects: one focusing at the district level, another at the school level, a third at the classroom level, and finally, one that focuses on school professionals. In addition, the METRO Center is offering technical assistance and information services on issues relevant to metropolitan areas. The SIS project is primarily focusing at the district and community level. At this point, the SIS project is a research effort, but in its next phase, we will offer to assist districts and communities in developing policies and practices that meet their students' needs.

This paper is organized as follows. The first section lays the background for the SIS project by providing information about the growing numbers of educationally disadvantaged students in the metropolitan areas of the Pacific Southwest. This section presents two key messages. First, there has been extraordinary growth in the numbers of students from linguistic minority backgrounds and in the numbers of languages the students speak. Second, the metropolitan area growth has not been in the central cities, but, rather, in what Garreau (1991) and others term "edge cities." As a result, the local education authorities (LEAs) have been faced with a challenge to their old ways of doing business.

The second section provides an overview of the SIS project, including the rationale for its inception. The section describes the study's intention and its general methodological framework. It leads into the remainder of the papers in the symposium by indicating that there were problems as the METRO Center began the work.

The paper concludes with a statement of where we see the SIS project going in the next four years.

Demographic Growth and Change

The challenge to the schools the METRO Center serves stems from the growth and increasing numbers of educationally disadvantaged students in the metropolitan areas of Arizona, California, and Nevada. Two facts about this growth are clear from the U.S. Census Bureau data. First, the largest amount of growth is in cities, termed edge cities, that have grown around the urban core and in formerly distant small towns that are now part of the "amoebae" of metropolitan areas (Hodgkinson, 1989). Second, the growth in the number of educationally disadvantaged students stems from the increase of the number of young people living in poverty and the number of language minority students that schools are currently serving. If the 1890 Census announced the closing of the frontier, the 1990 Census indicates the urbanization of America.

Edge Cities

According to Garreau (1991), edge cities "contain all the functions a city ever has, albeit in a spread-out form...Edge, because they are a vigorous world of pioneers and immigrants, rising far from the old downtown's, where little save villages or farmland lay only thirty years before" (p. 4).

Of the 30 "fastest-growing" U.S. cities with over 100,000 population, 23 are in Arizona, California, and Nevada. Of those, at least 19 are edge cities. For example, Moreno Valley, CA, was not even incorporated as a city in 1980 when its population was about 28,000. In 1990, its population was almost 119,000—a growth rate of almost 320%. Other high-growth edge cities in California include Irvine (77.6% growth, from 62,000 to 110,000), Oceanside (67.4% growth, 76,000 to 128,000), Santa Ana (44% growth, 204,000 to 294,000), and Pomona (42% growth, 93,000 to 132,000).

Edge cities also grew rapidly in Arizona. Mesa, Glendale, and Scottsdale grew 76% (from 163,000 to 288,000), 50% (98,000 to 148, 134), and 45% (90,000 to 130,000), respectively (*New York Times,* Jan. 28, 1991).

It is more difficult to talk about Nevada. Nevada's governance structure is such that Las Vegas and Reno include areas that would be edge cities in other states. However, Las Vegas grew 56% since the last Census, and Reno grew 32% (*New York Times,* Jan. 28, 1991).

Edge cities grow for many reasons. For some, the largest portion of the growth comes from the upward mobility of the middle and upper middle classes. These people are escaping from the problems of older edge cities and suburbs. The growth of some edge cities is "related historically to white flight" (Fiore, 1991, p. 22). Population growth in these cities reflects the desire to escape from increasingly multiracial and multiethnic schools in which Anglos constitute a minority. Those who fled continue to believe that African Americans and Latinos are more likely to live on welfare, be lazy, prone to violence, and less intelligent than whites (*Newsweek,* 1991, p. 57).

For other edge cities, the growth has been fed by the shift from a manufacturing economy and the subsequent loss of concentrated centers of jobs. This—coupled with the search for affordable housing—took individuals further from the urban core (Clifford & Roark, 1991; Garreau, 1991). In such edge cities, houses with reasonable amounts of room remained affordable to two-income, working-class and lower middle-class families long after they were priced out of more close-in residences. Even the poor found that their benefits stretched further in the edge cities.

Educational Disadvantage

Pallas (1989) defines "educationally disadvantaged" students as young people who have "...been exposed to insufficient educational experiences in at least one of three domains: families, communities, schools." According to Pallas, there are five "indicators" of disadvantagedness: racial/ethnic identity, poverty status, family composition, mother's education, and language background. Each of these is correlated with educational disadvantage. Children who live in poverty, for example, are less likely than their middle-class counterparts to attend schools that have programs that expand and extend their horizons. Consequently, children in poverty are at a disadvantage as they move through the grades. It is important to emphasize that the five indicators are *correlates* of educational disadvantage, and the fact that a child is from a family of color, poor, or raised in a single-parent household does not *determine* his or her fate.

Within the metropolitan areas of the region, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of children in poverty and the number of students who have limited English proficiency (LEP). The changes in the other indicators of disadvantage are much less dramatic. What follows are data illustrating the increases.

Poverty status. Data from the 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) indicate that 21.1% of all eighth graders live in households with incomes below $15,000 (Hafner et al.,

1990, June). In California, the percentage of children living in poverty rose from 12.7% in 1969 to a high of 25.6% in 1983. Since then, it has fluctuated in the 20% range, and in 1987, the number of children in poverty was at 23.6% (PACE, 1989, p. 53).

In the edge cities, as would be expected, there are differences in the poverty level between Irvine, for example, and inland cities. Further, although the percentage of students identified as coming from economically impoverished homes has remained stable in a number of the cities, the enormous growth in those cities means that the sheer numbers of poor children have increased phenomenally. The impact of the increase on schools is clear: It is far easier to provide 10 students who are economically needy with the goods and experiences they lack than it is to do so for 300, even if the 100 and 300 represent 5% of the population. In the first instance, voluntary and individual response can be adequate, but are unlikely to be in the second. There is a point at which quantitative changes have a qualitative effect. For example, a school district can serve 10 educationally disadvantaged children by providing support that requires little administrative activity, either within the district's own classrooms or through small-scale, pull-out programs. When the number of students increases to 30, policy and procedures—and administrative oversight—are needed to ensure the educationally disadvantaged receive equitable treatment.

As indicated above, Moreno Valley was the fastest-growing city in America during the past decade. The percentage of eighth graders who came from households receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in Moreno Valley also increased greatly, from 6.4% in 1984 to 11.9% in 1987. Oceanside, Santa Ana, Riverside, and Pomona saw fairly stable percentages of children whose families received AFDC, but the numbers increased greatly. In Santa Ana, Oceanside, and Riverside, the children whose families received AFDC fluctuated around 10% from 1984-87; and in Pomona, it was about 20%. However, the 10% represented an increase of almost 10,000 children in Santa Ana. The 20% in Pomona represented an increase of more than 40,000 children.

In Clark County (Las Vegas), 6.7% of families were below the poverty level in 1980, representing about 12% of all children. In 1989, 17% of the students qualified for free or reduced-price lunches. In 1980, 7.5% of the families and 10.5% of the individuals in Arizona's Maricopa County (Phoenix) and Pima County (Tucson) were below the poverty level. In 1989, the numbers were 9.1% and 13%, respectively. In 1989, 24% of the students in Maricopa County received free or reduced-priced lunches and in Pima County, 31% of its students were involved in the free or reduced-price lunch program.

Language background. Perhaps the greatest demographic change in the Pacific Southwest is the tremendous increase in LEP students. According to PACE (1991):

> In 1989-90, more than 860,000 California students were limited English proficient, up 16 % from 1988-89. Over the past five years the numbers of LEP students have grown nearly four times as fast as enrollments generally. The highest incidence of limited-English-proficiency occurs in the primary grades, but the rate of growth has been faster in the middle grades and high schools, reflecting substantial in-migration of older children. (pp. 23, 29)

The rapid increase is continuing: In 1990-1991, there were 986,462 LEP students in the state, with 44% of them residing in Los Angeles County. Perhaps more significant, the number of languages the students spoke is striking. Anaheim Union High School District, for example, hosts 63 language groups.

In the six most rapidly growing large (over 100,000 population) edge cities in California, the percentage of LEP students enrolled in sixth grade increased in four of the cities, including Irvine (which is largely Anglo), and decreased in two between 1984 and 1987. In all but Pomona, the absolute numbers increased. The percentage of LEP students in sixth grade increased in: Irvine, from 3% to 5%; Santa Ana, from 24.8% to 28%; Riverside, from 2.9% to 5%; and Oceanside, from 2.4% to 6.6%. Percentages of LEP students decreased in Moreno Valley, from 2.4% to 1.5% and Pomona, from 10.4% to 7.7%.

Maricopa County, AZ, serves 24,112 LEP students (6.44%), and Pima County, AZ, serves 9,358 (8.48%). The number of LEP students in Las Vegas tripled from 1984 to 1989, when it reached 4,200 (Pappa, 1989).

Conclusion

The major changes in the region set the stage for the SIS project. The question it addresses is, put simply, "How do school districts and communities rise to the challenge of serving increasing numbers of students who are different from those they had served earlier?" Our assumption was that some LEAs and communities are better hosts to their newcomer populations than are others. We wanted to identify the successful ones and find out the local conditions, policies, and programs that fostered positive action.

Study Design

The SIS project encompasses two phases. The first, which we have just completed, involved identifying LEAs that successfully met the challenge of the changing demographics. The remainder of this symposium is devoted to a description and analysis of how we went about the identification process and the problems we encountered. We are beginning the second phase—studies of successful and less successful school districts. The studies are designed to yield information about policies, practices, and programs that will allow us to provide technical assistance to additional districts facing similar challenges. This section provides a brief description of the theoretical stance that guides the study of the successful and less successful districts.

The study is guided by assumptions of the structural dominance theory (Persell, 1977), which holds that public school districts generally maintain the economic and social class, ethnic, and gender stratification that exist in the community, state, and region. As a result, newcomers who represent different ethnic or linguistic groups or economically disadvantaged populations are neither fully assimilated into the community structure nor assisted in modifying their relative disadvantages. Parents, teachers, community policymakers, elected officials, and, ultimately, students, often reify the cultural dominance. That is, standards of conduct, school philosophy, the types of creativity and thinking that are valued, the types of tests and their uses, and even students' images of themselves come to reflect the ideas of what is worthwhile that are, themselves, artifacts of class and ethnic sources of structural dominance in the larger community (Dentler, 1992).

However, within the United States, the dominance is not absolute nor always predictable. Although structures related to class, ethnicity, and gender tend to reproduce through various social means, the United States in the 1990s is not feudal Europe. As Dentler sums up the work of Jiobu (1988):

> Some subdominant ethnic and lingual minorities are much less well received than others...Some others are socially somewhat excluded, as with the Japanese and Koreans, while this does not prevent them from finding considerable success socioeconomically. (p. 6)

Further, in some communities, there is a commitment to challenge the existing structures. They are more likely than others to have made positive responses to the changing demographics. In others, the demographic changes have had political implications, with relative newcomers placing pressure on the governing powers to change policies and practices.

The SIS project staff will engage in extended field visits to the LEAs identified as particularly successful in hosting the newcomers. Similar visits also will be made to less successful LEAs to contrast policies, practices, and local culture. Because of its theoretical importance, community political culture will be carefully studied. In other words, we are seeking to describe not only school district policies and practices, but the community context in which they are fostered.

The field work will consist of five-day, two-person site visits. During the visits, additional student data will be collected (e.g., additional student achievement information; attendance data; data concerned with tracking, dropouts, participation in activities). We also will judge the quality of integration in the LEA, the academic press in the schools, and the quality of education. Finally, we will interview up to 60 representatives from the schools and the community to determine the influences on how the LEA and community have welcomed the newcomers.

In the long run, the METRO Center wishes to offer technical assistance to LEAs and communities to increase their effectiveness with ethnolinguistically diverse newcomer students. To do so, we first have identified LEAs that are successfully hosting new students. Second, we are engaging in field studies to illuminate the community structures and culture, as well as LEA policies and practices that enhance positive responses to the demographic changes. Finally, we will work with LEAs and communities that wish to become better hosts to the students.

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